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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 004474

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM, L AND NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/03/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [EG](#) [JO](#) [ICRC](#)

SUBJECT: MDA: ISRAEL "WON'T PAY FOR MDA" WITH FOURTH CONVENTION MONITORING

REF: A. GENEVA 1251

[B.](#) CAIRO 3842

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. Israel would rather abandon the possibility of holding a diplomatic conference this fall than accept Swiss Envoy Pfirter's proposal to overcome Egyptian/Arab League opposition by recommending Fourth Convention follow-on monitoring mechanisms when Switzerland presents its International Humanitarian Law (IHL) report to the UNGA in June, an Israeli official told visiting PRM PDAS Rich Greene.

Deputy Director General Roni Ya'ar believes the author of Switzerland's Fourth Committee report is also resisting this linkage based on the meetings the latter has held with the Israeli Supreme Court President and the Palestinian FM over the last two weeks. However, Ya'ar plans to reinforce GOI opposition when he meets Ambassadors Staehelin and Pfirter in Bern following the internal May 23 Swiss meeting on conference next steps. In the meantime, Ya'ar assured us that he would personally ensure Magen David Adom (MDA)'s Chairman does not repeat his threats to retaliate against the Swiss if they failed to convene the conference, and would also start ramping up bilateral engagement with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. Ya'ar was uncertain if the PM's office had any "leverage" with Egypt on the emblem issue and expressed appreciation for USG efforts to engage the GOE.

Separately, regionally-based IFRC and ICRC Standing Commission officials told Greene that they remain concerned that MDA is not making sufficient efforts to bring their statutes into line with movement requirements. END SUMMARY.

ISRAEL REFUSES TO USE FOURTH CONVENTION REPORT

¶12. (C) Israel's MFA Deputy Director General for UN and International Organization Affairs, Roni Ya'ar, presented his government's early reaction to the strategy that Swiss Envoy on the Emblem Didier Pfirter is proposing to overcome Egyptian/Arab League opposition to the idea of convening a diplomatic conference to establish a neutral third emblem for the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement (ref A) with visiting PRM PDAS Richard Greene in Jerusalem May 16. Ya'ar said Israel opposed the idea of building Arab support for the conference by appending recommendations such as monitoring mechanisms to the IHL report that Switzerland is expected to present to the UNGA in June. (NOTE: The UNGA invited Switzerland to present this report at its 10th Emergency Session on the ICJ ruling on the barrier. END NOTE.) Ya'ar noted that the Swiss are pressing the idea of monitoring the Gaza Strip's Rafah customs terminal, but stressed that GOI opposition to such linkage is equally firm. Israel, Ya'ar continued, will not "pay a price for MDA membership," adding that the GOI will consider the conference "dead" the minute the Swiss attempted to link it to an UNGA resolution that opposes Israel's disengagement plan.

¶13. (C) However, Ya'ar thought the author of the Swiss Fourth Committee report, Ambassador Staehelin, would resist such linkage based on his May 8-14 visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah. According to Ya'ar, Staehelin told Palestinian FM Nasser al Kidwa that there was "no room" to hold a conference on Fourth Committee issues. Ya'ar conceded that the Swiss are "frustrated" that Israeli Supreme Court President Barak refuses to talk about the barrier while the issue is still before the court, but argued that the Swiss should be encouraged that the Swiss report will reference Supreme Court opinions, given that the GOI initially told Staehelin it would "recognize international law" when Staehelin requested that the GOI take action to recognize the ICJ ruling last year.

ISRAELI NEXT STEPS, APPRECIATION FOR U.S. ENGAGEMENT

¶14. (C) Ya'ar indicated that he would reiterate Israel's opposition to MDA membership/Fourth Committee report linkage in Bern May 23-24, where he is scheduled to meet Ambassadors Staehelin and Pfirter following the internal Swiss MFA meeting on conference next steps. Ya'ar agreed that Egypt remained key, noting that Israel had received conflicting

third-hand reports on the level of Arab opposition to the conference, and was uncertain who within the GOE was "calling the shots" on the emblem issue. Ya'ar expressed strong appreciation for U.S. efforts to engage the Egyptians, noting that Israel would ramp up its bilateral engagement with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. He also assured Greene that he would personally ensure that MDA Chair Noam Yifrach worked to repair MDA's public image following the latter's recent threat to block Swiss diplomatic facilities with MDA ambulances.

IFRC, STANDING COMMISSION CONCERNED ABOUT MDA READINESS

15. (C) Separately, regionally-based IFRC and ICRC Standing Commission officials told PDAS Greene in May 16-17 meetings in Jerusalem and Amman that they remain concerned about MDA's readiness. IFRC Representative in Israel Anna Segall explained that MDA appears to have over-estimated its internal capacity, noting that MDA officials continue to claim they can bring its statutes into line with movement requirements in "two weeks." Segall thought it was critical to turn MDA's high-level commitment to ensure that its statutes are in compliance ahead of the conference into immediate on-the-ground action by MDA staff. She hoped to kick-start the process by securing MDA's agreement to participate in the IFRC's standard national self-assessment tool, and then contract a local organization with expertise in organizational change to maintain the momentum. Segall noted that IFRC was in discussions with the American Red Cross (ARC) about funding, but currently lacked the estimated USD 15,000-20,000 in required funds. In addition, Segall added that she also planned to approach MDA about its poor "presentation skills," observing that even MDA-ARC relations appeared strained.

16. (C) ICRC Standing Commission (SC)/Jordan Red Crescent President Dr. Al Hadid told Greene that he hoped ARC would do more to support renewed MDA-Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) joint training/capacity building, adding that he would also continue to maintain pressure on MDA to start its legal review immediately. (NOTE: Al Khatib was retained as PRCS President at the annual PRCS meeting held in Ramallah May 19-22. END NOTE.) Al Hadid noted that the SC remains supportive of the idea of holding a diplomatic conference this fall, and urged the U.S. not to be swayed by apparent Arab intransigence, pointing to the fact that Egypt's Red Crescent Society President remains committed.

17. (U) PDAS Greene cleared this message.

HALE